SPORT

SEPTEMBER 25¢

EXCLUSIVE
ACTION PHOTOS

HOW ROBERTS DOES IT

WEST COAST EDITION

THE 49ers WON'T BLOW IT AGAIN!

•

SHOULD WE HAVE A BOXING SCOREBOARD?

•

NOBODY SECOND-GUESSES RED SANDERS

THE MEANING OF COURAGE

By IRV DRASNIN

Winner of $100 prize in SPORT story contest

THE GREATEST game I ever saw wasn't won in the last second of play. Its outcome didn't decide any championships. Nor did it have an individual star. Yet, it was evident from the game's second play that it held far more drama for the 75,000 watching it than any ordinary contest. On that second play a blue-jerseyed form moved from his wingback position in the UCLA single-wing, took a hand-off, and broke into the University of Southern California secondary for a sizeable gain. Nothing spectacular. Indeed, nothing more than a well executed weakside reverse play. Under any circumstances the success of the play would have evoked a thunderous retort from the emotional crowd witnessing the tradition-heated rivalry between the two schools. But the instant that UCLA halfback touched the ball, a heart-warming chill enveloped the huge audience. Whenever the Bruins needed that vital few yards to keep a drive going throughout the remainder of the afternoon, they called upon this same halfback to get them, and he didn't fail once. He didn't score any touchdowns or make any long, dazzling runs, yet everyone knew they were seeing one of the greatest and most courageous efforts ever performed on the gridiron.

The halfback's name was Howard Hansen, a senior playing his last collegiate game. He was a product of the local city school system, having been an all-city guard at Fremont High School. He had weighed but 155 pounds then, and hadn't even been able to try out with the varsity until his senior year. But Howie was devoted to the game, and what's more, he was determined to play it. Following his graduation he went into the Marine Corps as a flier. It was in the service that he matured and grew—physically, mentally and athletically. Later, he returned to UCLA where he had shown promise as a shifty runner.

And so Howie came down to his final college game against his bitter cross-town foes, USC. Howie and his teammates had never beaten the Trojans, and this was to be their last chance. Hansen had married since his return to school, and his wife La Von had followed his playing career closely. They were the parents of two sons, and responsibility sometimes seemed too much for Howie as he rationed his time between studies, part-time work to support his family, and football. Then La Von had a recurrence of a childhood affliction of rheumatic fever and was confined to bed with a heart condition. The breaks were beginning to stack up against the 25-year-old veteran. Even through these arduous times, La Von encouraged her husband in his football activities, knowing what it meant to him. And because of her he continued.

Shortly before the SC game, La Von had a stroke, and the Thursday before the game, she passed away. Hansen was grief-stricken, but the next day he phoned coach Red Sanders and asked his permission to play in Saturday's game. "I know she would have wanted me to play," he said.

And indeed Howie Hansen played that day—it was his day, the day when with him at wingback, UCLA would crush their bitter Trojan rivals. The final score was 39-0. When the game was over, the Bruins carried the handsome, dirt-smudged Hansen off the field. He had battled as he had never battled before, and he lost his becoming manliness which he had retained through his ordeal for just a moment as tears filled his eyes. He must have felt that his wife would know and be proud of him.

The story of Howie Hansen doesn't end here, however, even though his playing days do. Unbelievable tragedy followed in his wake. Two weeks later his father, Edgar J. Hansen, died. Their relationship was more than father and son, and a less religious man would surely not have been able to hold up under the sorrow and anguish which overcame Hansen. A year later he decided again to turn to football, and signed to play with the Edmonton Eskimos of the Canadian Football League. On the night of September 28, 1951, while driving to join the team, Hansen's car was involved in an accident, and was overturned. His two-year-old son was instantly killed and he himself barely escaped with injuries. Within the span of a year, Hansen had lost his wife, his father, and his oldest son. And though fate seemed to await his every move with more grief and heartbreak, Howie always felt that someday he would rejoin his loved ones.

Whether or not he hastened that day with personal intent shall never be known, but on April 13, 1952, his crumpled body was found at the bottom of Squaw Peak near Provo, Utah. No longer would he suffer from the bitter role life had designated for him. You have to believe that at last he has found comfort and relief, and his final words in the Bruin dressing room following that memorable game of November 25, 1950, perhaps leaves us all with one moral lesson, "There is a merciful God."

rhubarbs, I suggest he confine his efforts to his job in that circuit and let the Yankees alone," Weiss pontificated.

The immediate reaction for those who read this was (a) a vague feeling that an umpire dare not offend the champions and (b) a not so vague question whether a man loses his rights to free speech once he puts on an umpire's blue uniform.

Yet there should not have been surprise that the Yankees would jump as though bitten. They sting easily and invariably react loudly.

Rather than appreciate that the criticism which followed in the wake of their inter-league acquisitions of Johnny Mize (1949), Johnny Hopp (1950), Johnny Sain (1951), and Johnny Schmitz and Ewell Blackwell (1952) was a valid questioning of a loophole in baseball's waiver law, the Yankees took press remarks as a personal affront.

When Arthur Daley, the columnist of the New York *Times*, wrote that though there was nothing illegal in the transaction it was an "insolent flouting of the spirit of the law," president Dan Topping summoned a press conference that took reporters away from a Yankee-Red Sox game. Topping expressed bafflement at the criticism, since, he said, it was concentrated right in New York. He also said he had not read of similar criticism against the Indians when they purchased Wally Westlake and George Strickland from the National League.

Obviously Topping expected the New York writers to be apologists for the Yankees. Obviously he also exposed himself as not much of a reader, since the Indians were damned in the press as much as the Yankees for going into the other league to find help in the pennant fight. Topping did not point out that it was Cleveland which was leading the fight to tighten the waiver rule, and, when the action finally officially was begun last winter, it was the Yankees again who felt personally attacked.

Came another news bulletin complaining that the Yankees had been "cast in a bad light" by the proposal. "There have been legislative attempts before to curb the winning habits of the Yankees. Isn't it about time that it became clear pennants are won on the ball field?"

Weiss clearly was rising to the bait of the oft-repeated opinion that the rich Yankees owe their pennants partly to their strong financial position. Most of this is sheer nonsense, of course. But it is a fact that no other club involved in the pennant race could have afforded the gamble on such as Blackwell. In the words of the song, money isn't everything, except when you've got the dough.

The Yankees have the dough. They have the tradition of victory and the personnel to keep that tradition alive. That, in essence, is the secret of the American success story, but there are a few other elements in it. Not tape measures for gauging the distance of Mickey Mantle's home runs. Not wildly whirling duplicating machines issuing manifestoes and denials. Not arm's-length relations of padrone and peon, which may breed fear but never love.

Just three simple little virtues which, in the long run, may be more important than all the pennants. They are humanity, humility and a sense of humor. Then nobody would hate the Yankees and they still would win.

—■—